

CALIFORNIA BRICK WORKS – PEGG'S GREEN
(Also later referred to as "Coleorton Sanitary Pipe &
Brick Company)



BY SAMUEL T STEWART – MARCH 2021
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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

An example of an "Intermittent burning down-draft type kiln" used in these brickworks.

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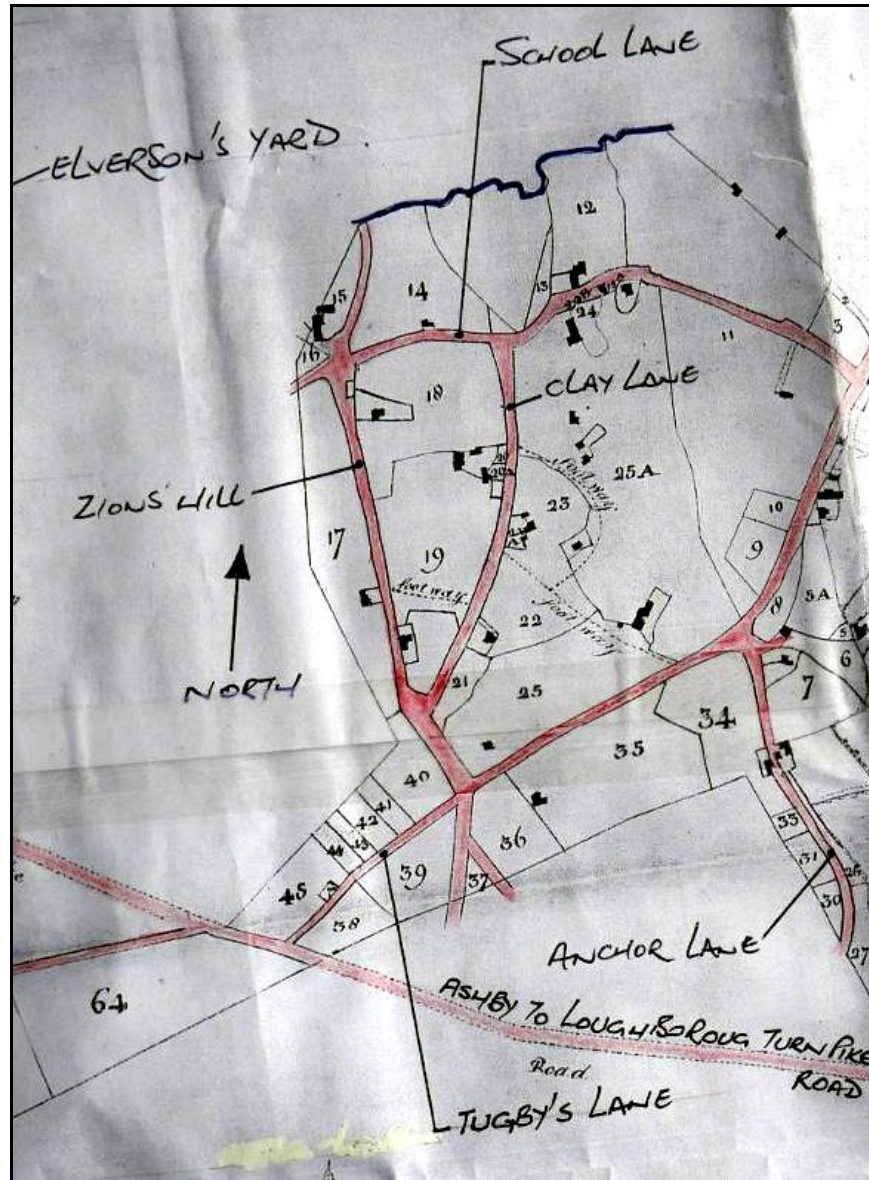
- **The Brickworks on Breedon Brand**
- **A History of Coleorton Brickworks**

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CALIFORNIA BRICK WORKS AT PEGG'S GREEN

Firstly, we need to establish certain facts about the location and ownership of the land on which these brickworks were established in the mid 1880's.



Extract from the 1807 Thringstone and Pegg's Green enclosure map.

California Brickworks were developed on plots 40 and 41 which are shown on the above extract from the 1807 plan surveyed and drawn by William Henry Smith and referred to in the awards made by the Commissioners of the Thringstone and Pegg's Green 1807 enclosure. The map has been annotated by the author with current road names. Pegg's Green, including these plots, became part of the Township of Thringstone which in turn formed part of the ecclesiastical parish of Whitwick. Because of this, the brickworks are

sometimes referred to as being in Thringstone which can make the research confusing if not aware of the above. Following a reorganization of local parish boundaries in 1936, Pegg's Green became part of the parish of Coleorton.

It is important to note that these plots of land were not part of the Coleorton Beaumont estate and this is confirmed on the 1920 Beaumont estate sale plans. The adjacent land on which the adjacent California (Coleorton No.1. Colliery) was sunk, was however part of the Beaumont estate, and owned by Sir George Beaumont. This was leased from Sir George by William Worswick and Benjamin Walker who developed the colliery.

In Kelly's 1895 Trade Directory of Leicestershire & Rutland, they record Samuel Davy as being a brick manufacturer at the California Brickworks, but infer wrongly that the address is Coleorton, instead of Pegg's Green / Thringstone.

In Kelly's 1899 Trade Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, they refer to the brickworks as "Coleorton Pipe & Brick Company - California Brickworks".

The following transcribed advertisement from the Coalville Times Newspaper dated Friday 30th July 1897 suggests that John H. Lager & Co., were the owners of the brickworks at this time.

"Important Announcement"

Blue Bricks of First Class Quality can now be obtained at the California Brickworks, Pegg's Green, Near Coleorton, Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Also Red Pressed Facing and Floor Bricks etc. The most desirable bricks in the locality. For prices etc., apply to the Manager at the Works or the Owners : John H. Lager & Co., Station Road, Swannington, Near Leicester.

However, the following extract taken from the London Gazette, confirms that John Henry Lager was in partnership with a William Henry Boss, an engineer from Measham in 1898, and the partnership was dissolved by mutual consent as from the 31st October, 1898. William Henry Boss continued to operate the business on his own, and took on responsibility for any debts. It was probably at this time that the manufacture of sanitary pipes commenced, hence the name of the company was changed from "California Brickworks" to "Coleorton (??) Pipe & Brick Company - California Brickworks".

THE LONDON GAZETTE, NOVEMBER 8, 1898.

NOTICE is hereby given, that the Partnership heretofore subsisting between us the undersigned, John Henry Lager and William Henry Boss, carrying on business as Brick and Tile Manufacturers, at Thringstone, in the county of Leicester, under the style or firm of J. H. Lager and Co., has been dissolved by mutual consent as and from the 31st day of October, 1898. All debts due to or owing by the said late firm will be received and paid by the said William Henry Boss who will continue to carry on the said business. — Dated this fifth day of November, 1898.

J. H. LAGER.

W. H. BOSS.

The following report transcribed from the Hinckley Times dated Saturday 13th March 1897 suggests that William Boss did not enter into partnership with John Lager till after this date:-

NO LICENSE

William Henry Boss, contractor, Measham, was summoned for using a locomotive at Dosthill, on Feb 12th, without having a license to do so. - P.C. Wormleighton said on the day named he saw defendant's man in charge of a traction engine on the Coventry Road - Dosthill, in the parish of Kingsbury. He asked if he had a license, when the man in charge replied that he was unaware of any such document being necessary. - Defendant said he had previously been reported by the Leicestershire police, but no proceedings had been taken. He considered that he had the right to move portable engines for agricultural purposes, with a traction engine, without a license. - Supt. Hannah said defendant was using his own traction engine for the purpose of hauling a portable one. - Defendant was ordered to pay £1 12s. including costs.

A year later the brickworks were put up for sale by William Henry Boss. This confirmed that the brickworks sat over a bed of clay 42 feet deep so Sam Leach's estimate of a 40 to 50 feet deep clay hole in his later reminiscences article was correct.

The following is transcribed from a report in the Coalville Times dated Friday 12th October 1900 :-

**To Brick & Pipe Manufacturers- Coleorton, Leicestershire
Orchard, Joyce & Marson**

**Are Instructed by the Coleorton Sanitary Pipe & Brick Co. to Sell by Auction at the
Beaumont Arms Inn, Coleorton**

On Monday, October 22nd, 1900,

At 4 pm,

ALL THAT SANITARY PIPE AND BRICKYARD situate at St. George's Hill, Coleorton with the valuable seams of clay belonging thereto to a depth of 43 feet, and the whole of the Buildings, Shedding, Kilns, Fixed Plant and Machinery.

For further particulars, and to view, apply to Mr. W. H. Boss, engineer, Measham, Atherstone ; the Auctioneers, Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Higham near Nuneaton ; or to

**Messrs. DEWES AND MUSSON
Solicitors, Ashby-de-la-Zouch.**

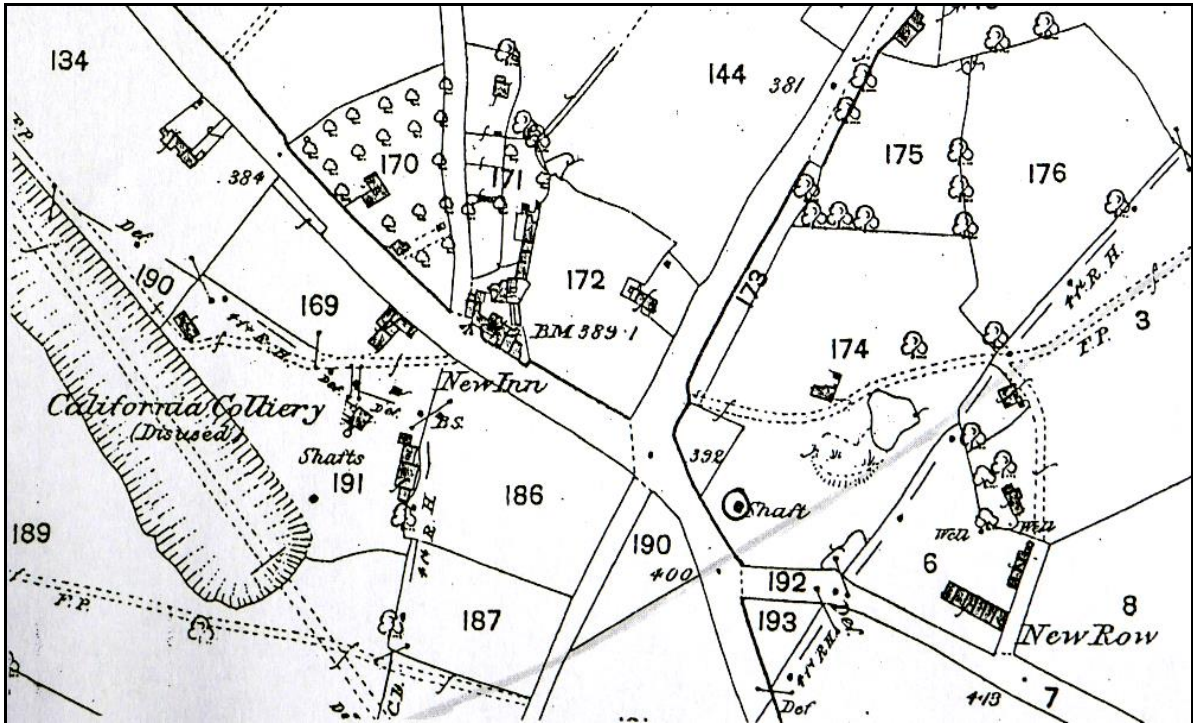
We know from the 1903 6 inch O/S map which follows later that the brickyard was disused by then, so it is reasonable to assume that they ceased to operate following the above auction sale in 1900. The author was surprised to learn what a short life of some 15 years the brickworks apparently had.

Looking at the layout of the site there must have been a significant investment made in its infrastructure, but it clearly never returned a profit on the investment by the end of its short life and it would not have been able to compete with the brickworks at Newbold.

The brickyard was significantly more modern than the brickworks at Coleorton and on Breedon Brand.

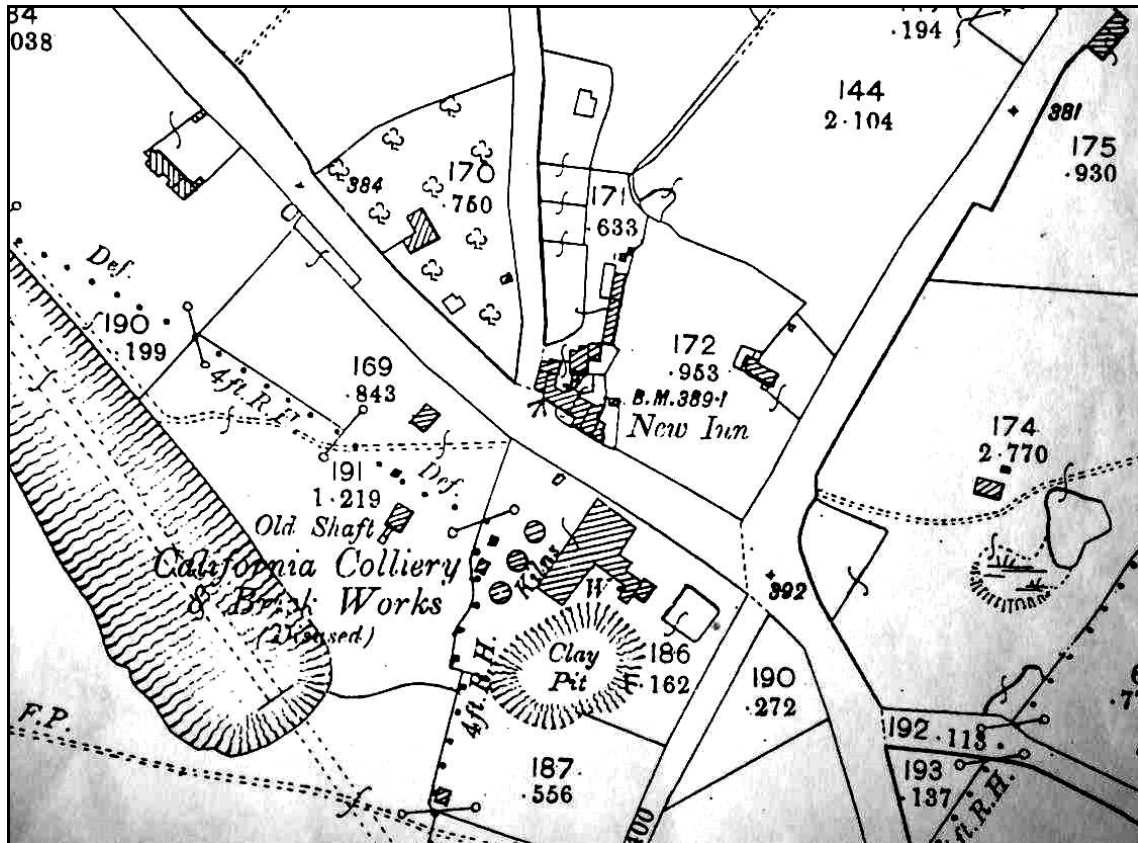
The fact that there were three round type down draft intermittent burning kilns on the site suggests that the output was significant at some point, and the layout suggests that heat from the kilns was also transferred by underground flues to heat the green brick drying sheds opposite the New Inn and out to the atmosphere by perhaps a common tall chimney of which there is some suggestion of on the following 1903 map drawing.

Whether Clay Lane got its name from Clay being dug out in the vicinity for the brickworks cannot be proved, but there seems to be no other plausible explanation.



Extract from the 1881/2 surveyed 1885 published O/S map –
no brickworks are shown on plots 186 and 187

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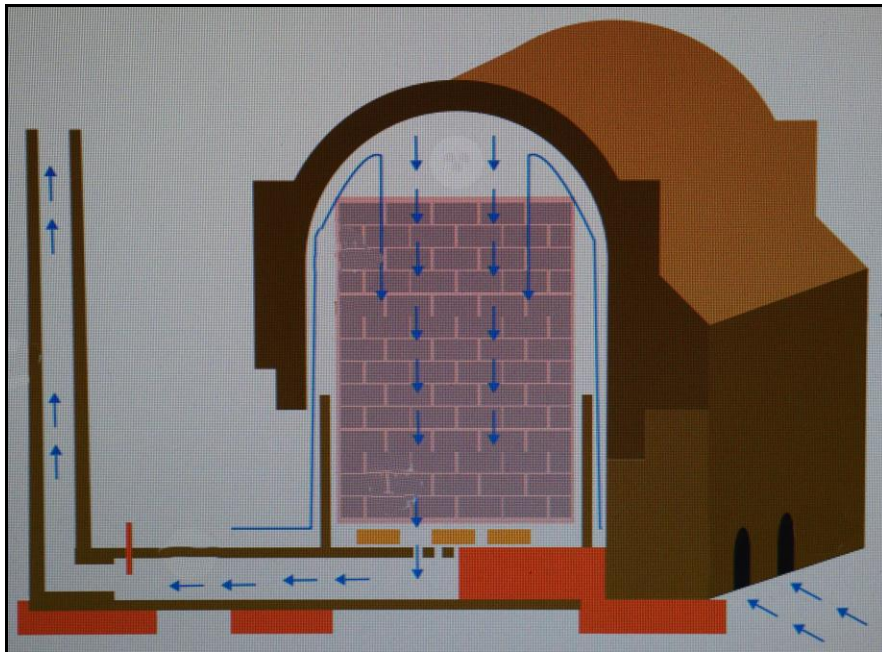


Extract from 1903 O/S Map showing brickworks on plot 186 and 187 as being disused

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Intermittent burning down-draft type kiln



Principle of intermittent down-draft kiln

REMINISCENCES BY SAM LEECH

The Other California in Peggs Green, Coleorton

Reminiscences by Mr Sam Leech of Pentire, Nottingham Road, Peggs Green,

I was born in 1913 at the above address opposite to California Brickworks on which is built the house now known as California Cottage. My father and grandfather lived at Pentire and I had ten brothers and sisters.

My first memories are of the Zeppelin raids on Loughborough in 1918 and by 1919 I well remember the brick works which was probably leased from the Beaumont Estate about 1860. This had finished making bricks about the time I was born and had been sold to Mr Joseph Morley who was landlord of the New Inn at the time. A derelict steam engine still stood in the engine house and there was a rail track running alongside down into the clay hole which may have been 40 -50 feet deep. At the side, opposite the New Inn, I remember the brick drying shed. Next to the brick works there were the engine foundations and other remains of California Colliery (probably named after the 19th century gold rush) which closed in 1873 and the entrance to the tunnel of the Coleorton Railway, deep in a cutting behind the colliery. In the 1926 miners' strike, coal was worked in the cutting and tunnel until someone was killed and the cutting and tunnel entrance were filled. The tunnel was finally filled in the 1950's.

A start was made in filling the clay hole with ash and local rubble and in 1923 the engine house was made into a house, called California Cottage, for Joe Morley's son, Andrew. He lived there with his wife until he died in the 1930's when the house and the section of the land on which it stood passed to another son, Bill Morley. Other sons owned sections of the land. The part beyond the clay hole at the back of the site is still owned by Joe Morley's great great grandchildren. Bill built on a kitchen and bedroom and bought all the sections fronting onto Zion Hill in the 30's. Water came from a well near the present garage and night soil and other refuse was tipped into the clay hole. He continued to fill the clay hole with any material until it was filled roughly to its present position after the war. It was very rough and only nettles grew in it and a hole about ten feet deep was left at the back to dispose of any rubbish. Land round the clay hole was used to grow vegetables and fruit trees although there is coal and fireclay just below the surface and the land is not very fertile. Bonfires on the original surface had a habit of setting fire to the coal underneath which burnt for several days.

The brick drying shed was about 60 feet long by 20 feet wide and stood about where the present garage stands. It had a honeycomb brick floor (still under the lawn) and I was told that a furnace was built near the colliery site and the hot air came from this and circulated through the drying shed.

Bricks and floor tiles were made, many of which can be seen around the village. Bill Morley used the shed to keep machinery, carts and a brake with which he and his father had transported villagers since before the First World War. The shed either fell or was knocked down during the 1940's and the derelict base was visible until the 1970's. In the 1930's an open sided shed was erected near the front hedge where local consumptives slept all year round in the fresh air! Later there was a fish and chip shop on the site. The land around the sheds up to the front hedge was used to grow vegetables.

At the Nottingham Road side of the workshop was the reservoir for the steam engine. This was a brick tank about 8 feet deep. It was full of water and children used to swim in it and on one occasion a horse and cart fell into it. In the 1940's it was filled with rubble until it was a nettle filled depression.

NOTE

The brickworks were not leased from the Beaumont Estate and were not in operation before 1881.